



MICHAEL N. FEUER
CITY ATTORNEY

REPORT NO. R 1 4 - 0 3 0 2
JUL 17 2014

REPORT RE:

**CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)
ATTORNEY RESOURCES FOR COMMUNITY PLAN UPDATES**

The Honorable City Council
of the City of Los Angeles
Room 395, City Hall
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Honorable Members:

Over the past several years, the Planning Department has sought to update the City's many Community Plans. These Plans are a crucial tool used to guide the physical development of neighborhoods by establishing the goals and policies for land use. While the General Plan sets out a long-range vision and guide to future development, the Community Plans provide the specific, neighborhood-level detail, relevant policies, and implementation strategies necessary to achieve the General Plan objectives. These Plans must be periodically updated. The new Community Plans will: integrate land use, infrastructure and transportation improvement; direct growth to centers while preserving established residential neighborhoods; create healthier, more livable neighborhoods and economically vital business districts that can provide more job and housing opportunities for city residents; and, facilitate improved design of new and renovated structures and public spaces.

Attorneys with specialized expertise are needed to assist the process of updating these Community Plans. Significant development, including Community Plan updates, trigger extensive analysis pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The CEQA process provides an important opportunity to evaluate the environmental impact of such a project, and provides a chance for meaningful community input. A flawed CEQA process, however, can harm communities and delay, or even derail, Plans or projects that are important to our constituents, the City's economic development and an improved quality of life in our neighborhoods.

The City Attorney's Office and the Planning Department have sought to strengthen our working relationship in a joint effort to fortify the City's CEQA compliance. The goal is to ensure adequate evaluation of environmental impacts and create environmental analyses that will, if necessary, withstand judicial challenge. Unfortunately, due to budget reductions over the past several years, the City Attorney's CEQA staff has been significantly downsized. Without attorneys specifically trained in CEQA, the Office has been unable to fully engage with the Planning Department on the numerous Community Plan updates currently underway.

Recognizing that serious budget challenges still exist throughout the City, we have worked to identify appropriate funding sources to support one new CEQA attorney. The Planning Department has determined that this position can be fully funded by the Long Range Planning Special Revenue Fund. The monies in the Fund are used by the Planning Department to maintain the City's General Plan and all associated underlying plans or elements, ordinances, and other associated planning initiatives, including Community Plans.

We are hopeful that this added attorney will serve as the first step in rebuilding our CEQA resources, allowing us to provide clients with advice prior to and throughout the CEQA process that could head off preventable problems and strengthen our capacity to successfully defend CEQA-based litigation. In essence, investing in CEQA staff will provide better outcomes for our communities, directly inspiring economic development and potentially saving the City significant funds in litigation costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Authorize by resolution (1) Deputy City Attorney III, Class Code 0552 for the period 8/15/2014 - 6/30/2015;
2. Authorize the Controller to transfer \$168,959 from Account 68999J, Reserve for Future, to the following accounts within the Long Range Planning Special Revenue Fund, Fund No. 52F:

<u>Account</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Amount</u>
68112L	City Attorney	\$120,728
68299L	Reimbursement of General Fund	<u>\$ 48,231</u>
	Total	\$168,959

3. Authorize the Controller to increase \$120,728 to Fund 100, Department 12, Account 1010 - Salaries, General;
4. Authorize the Controller to reimburse the associated related costs, up to \$48,231, from Fund 52F, Long Range Planning Special Revenue Fund, Account 68299L to Fund 100, Department 12, Revenue Source - 5361.

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Thank you for consideration. We look forward to our continued partnership on behalf of the residents of the City. The respective staff of both the Planning Department and the City Attorney's Office are available to provide any additional information needed regarding this request.

Sincerely,



LEELA KAPUR
Chief of Staff



MICHAEL LOGRANDE
Director of Planning

cc: Miguel Santana, City Administrative Officer
Gerry Miller, City Legislative Analyst